



LITTLE LOAF BIG TASTE

To make two small wholemeal loaves each approx 500 g in 6" x 4" tins or two cobs.

Ingredients

*375g lukewarm water (around 35°C depending on flour temperature)
4g dried yeast or 8g fresh yeast
30g of dark muscovado sugar.*

*100g strong white flour, 500g wholemeal flour
6 - 8g salt
40g olive oil*

Mixing the dough – 10 minutes

Measure the **lukewarm water** into a baking bowl.
Dissolve the **yeast** and **muscovado sugar** in the water.
Add the **strong white, wholemeal flour**, and **salt** working the mixture by hand or with a spatula until all the flour is incorporated.
Pour on the **olive oil** and fold/knead into the dough.

Kneading the dough – 10 minutes

Use whatever style of kneading suits you. A wet dough is messier but will rise better so think twice about adding extra flour.

Place the dough in the oiled bread bowl smooth side down, and then turn it over so the creases are on the bottom. The oiled surface now on top will prevent a crust from forming on the dough.

Rising and punching down the dough - 50 minutes plus 40 minutes

Place the bowl in warm place covered with a tea towel for 50 minutes to let the dough rise roughly doubling in size.
After the 50 minutes of rising punch the dough down by pushing fist or fingers into the dough steadily and firmly to force out the gas.
Cover the dough again and leave in a warm place for 40 minutes.

To shape into loaves and prove – 20 minutes

Turn on the oven at 180⁰ C.
Turn the dough onto the board and divide in two.
Roll up the dough into a log shape. Pinch the seams together all the way along.
Place loaves in lightly oiled tins with seam up. Dough should fill the tins two-thirds full.
Flatten the dough out with backs of fingers then turn loaf over so the seam is now on the bottom, and the oiled smooth side is on top. Press again into shape of pan with backs of fingers.
Cover and leave in a warm place to prove for 15 minutes from the finish of the last loaf.

To make a cob roll one half of the dough into a log shape then tuck in the bottom edge all the way round. Keep doing this until you have a ball of dough with a smooth round top. Put this smooth side down on a well floured tea towel in a small wicker basket or equivalent, flip the ends of the towel over the loaf then leave in a warm place for 15 minutes

Preparing the loaves for the oven - 5 minutes

Dust with flour (white, semolina or coarse oatmeal) then cut diagonal slits to allow the dough to continue to expand in the oven.

Baking – 50 minutes

Bake at 180⁰ C for 45-55 minutes. Pour half a mug of boiling water quickly into a baking tin in the bottom of the oven immediately after you pop the loaves in, and again after 5 minutes to keep the top soft so that the loaves can continue to rise.

The bread is done when the top is brown, the sides and bottoms are brown, and the shoulders of the loaf are firm. The target colour depends on the proportions of white to wholemeal flour in the loaf.

If you make just one larger loaf, bake at a lower temperature for longer.

Remove the loaves from the bread tins immediately and cool on wire trays. This bread keeps well and freezes well with little loss of flavour or freshness.

Baking in quantity - 8 small loaves or cobs

When I bake in quantity I use a sponge mixture, that is an initial mixture with all the yeast, water, sugar, and a proportion of the flour, say one third, but none of the fat or salt. With all the water but only some of the flour the sponge is very runny which helps the yeast to multiply quickly.

Beat this mixture thoroughly, then leave it covered in a warm place for an hour, or as I do, overnight. The overnight ferment helps the final bread to develop a really good flavour, and magically, makes it easier to digest.

In the morning add the remaining ingredients and do the kneading then otherwise proceed as above.

If it fits in better with the rest of your day, you could make the sponge mixture early in the morning, then continue with the remaining ingredients/kneading/proving/baking etc in the early evening.

Sponge ingredients

*1500g lukewarm water around 35°C
15g dried yeast or 30g fresh yeast
120g of dark muscovado sugar.
650g each of wholemeal flour and strong white flour.
or 1100g wholemeal plus 200g strong white flour*

Remaining ingredients

*30g salt
150g olive oil
600g each of whole wheat flour and strong white flour
or 1200g wholemeal flour*